

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001275

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2014

TAGS: GM PREL TU

SUBJECT: CHANCELLOR SCHROEDER VISITS TURKEY

REF: A. ANKARA 975

¶B. ANKARA 581

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter, E. O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Chancellor Schroeder's February 23-24 visit to Turkey, the first by a German Chancellor in 11 years, yielded vigorous-sounding assertions of support for Turkey's EU aspirations. Amid good atmospherics, Schroeder urged the Turks to keep on track on human rights and Cyprus. End Summary.

"Surprisingly Clear" Support for Turkey's EU Aspirations

¶2. (U) Schroeder met on February 23 with PM Erdogan and President Sezer, and then participated in an Erdogan-hosted lunch. After economic and commercially-oriented meetings in Istanbul, Schroeder participated with Erdogan in the opening of a \$1.5 billion power plant in Adana, Germany's largest investment to date in Turkey.

¶3. (C) German Embassy Counselor Hassmann characterized Schroeder's assertion of support for Turkey's EU aspirations as "surprisingly clear." Saying he had not expected such a clear expression of commitment to Turkish accession, Hassmann speculated Schroeder was trying to draw a clear contrast between himself and Turkey-skeptic CDU-CSU leader Angela Merkel, who visited the previous week (ref A) and proposed a version of EU association for Turkey. By contrast, Hassmann said, Schroeder's statements in Turkey were designed to look statesmanlike, decisive, and to re-invigorate Germany's pro-Turkey camp. Turkish MFA Western Europe Department Head Kemal Eruygur said that Schroeder specifically told Erdogan Germany would not make any concessions to domestic opponents of Turkish membership.

¶4. (U) In a joint press conference following his meeting with PM Erdogan, Schroeder stated that "Germany supports Turkey's wish to become an EU member" and "Turkey can most definitely depend on Germany on the issue of support... I think our vote, which will be based on the report of the European Commission, is clear as well. Our vote is with Turkey and for starting negotiations as soon as possible provided the conditions are met."

Human Rights and Cyprus

¶5. (C) On human rights, Schroeder encouraged Turkey to keep on track. According to Eruygur, Schroeder opined that Turkey has mostly concluded satisfying the Copenhagen Criteria's legal requirements. Both Hassmann and Eruygur said Schroeder noted that some areas need improvement in practice, but mentioned no specific areas or cases. On Cyprus, he told Erdogan that Germany counts on Turkey continuing to use its influence to help the parties reach a solution.

Good Atmospherics

¶6. (C) Hassmann said the visit's atmospherics were good; there were no "uncomfortable" subjects in the private discussions and the Turks consistently emphasized to the Germans the visit's importance. Erdogan invited Schroeder to fly to Adana in his private jet; Schroeder accepted. In Adana, the GOT set up grandstands and for the opening and thousands of spectators showed up, bussed in by the government, Hassmann speculated.

¶7. (C) Comment: Both sides expected a positive visit (ref B) -- and got it. Schroeder's comments, for instance to the press, were nuanced, but the Turks now appear to consider that, come December, the GOG will be solidly in the pro-Turkey camp. End Comment.

